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Another View of Mr. Barney's Book

If he has seen the apple-blossoms sway
In all their hallowed vesture.

The answer is to be found in a few of the maturer poems scattered throughout the volume, and most frequently, perhaps, in the section entitled *France*. These latter embody a sensitive, yet strong and austere nature's reactions to the sodden tragedy of war. Life has wrung a clear cry from the chaotic heart of youth, and a distinct personality and a distinct message begin to emerge from the cloud of adolescent imagery.

Few living poets have possessed to the same degree as Mr. Barney, with equal mastery of verbal music, the austere and inexorable spirituality which is so passionately revealed in his moments of genuine articulacy.

John Hall Wheelock

CORRESPONDENCE

A PARIS LETTER

This is my first letter from Paris. I have asked a friend of mine to help me choose the flowers that I present to the readers of POETRY out of the overgrown gardens of modern verse. He is also a poet and I shall tell you some day about his *Coureur d'azur* (*Azure Runner*).

Some critics had fondled the hope that the war would bring a new sort of lyricism, and bury forever the traditional forms of French verse. But the course of poetry has not been changed by five years of cannon-roar. The pre-

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war poets seem to consider the terrible adventure of 1914 as a mere accident. In 1914 the poetic schools were fast disappearing; they are quite extinct in 1920. Yet two or three strong influences seem to permeate modern verse. We shall try to make them clear.

Since October, 1919, several books of verse have appeared. *Imageries des Mers* is perhaps the most interesting. Its author had already attracted the critics' and amateurs' attention by his *La Floraison des Eaux*, *Livre de la Mort*, and *Des Fleurs pourquoi*. The artistic tendencies of Guy Lavaud have not been changed by the war. This verse is the most savory fruit of the Mallarméan tree. Mallarmé's teaching has been profitable, and his glory is brighter than ever.

Guy Lavaud's poetry is a perpetual illusion. The fading of the hills in the night, the sun-abandoned waters, made one with the dying body of the beloved in *Livre de la Mort*. Today it is the sea—its sands, its islands, its barks, its ever-changing pageantry—that molds the face of destiny and the mystery of poetic inspiration.

D'un cœur qui se détache on a quitté le monde,
Un froissement d'étrave ouvre l'immensité;
Mais tout de même en nous quel souvenir si blonde,
Comme un sein de sirène une île réparait.

His form is pure artistry, and here again Mallarmé's influence is discernible.

A quite different book is *Lampes à arc*, by Monsieur Paul Moraud, who belongs to the so-called cubist school, the only group of poets which has survived the war. But its leader, Guillaume Apollinaire, died a soldier, and his was a very

pathetic death. Max Jacole, Jean Cocteau, Paul Moraud are the only inheritors of Apollinaire's ideas worth mentioning.

Paul Moraud is a fanciful ironist:

Les villas sont serrées au bord de la promenade
Comme des incisives;
Tandis qu'au-dessus,
Comme de noires molaires déchaussées,
Les couvents jésuites
Mastiquent un paysage de montagnes.

Lampes à arc reveals another strong influence, that of Rimbaud, only we do not find in Moraud's book the psychological vistas that illumine Arthur Rimbaud's extraordinary work.

The cubist school has entirely freed itself from any kind of rhythm. We need not blame them for it; we may even assert that they have given us far better things than myriads of insipid alexandrine-writers. Yet the cubist school lacks an essential character of eternal poetry—its lyrical sway.

Opposite the cubist school we find a few good writers of traditional verse; only Francis Eon's and Vincent Muselli's tradition is not a wrinkled dame—they both are disciples of Moréas, whose *Stances* have been another strong influence on French verse. Muselli, who had already given us *Les Travaux et les Jeux*, displays in his *Masques* a real ability for heroic-comic verse. There is quite a tradition of heroic-comic poetry in French literature: Muselli's muse reminds the reader of another no less famous—Saint Amand's. Muselli is obviously influenced by the Parnassian school, whose perfection of form occasionally tempts a French mind. José Maria Hérédia has taught a great lesson of

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elaborate artistry to Muselli and others, yet Moréas' *Stances* are less overwrought with descriptive details, and for that reason nearer to the directness of our times. Muselli writes:

Mieux que des potentats les pompeuses demeures,
Ta gargote m'est chère, et, libre de soucis,
Sous un plafond tombant entre des murs noircis,
J'y coule sans compter les plus belles des heures.

Les Masques presents that easy-going philosophy, that serene melancholy, that smiling acceptance of human destiny, which are so beautifully disclosed in the *Stances*.

La Vie Continue, by Francis Eon, is a book of lyrics, with French scenery as a background, and with echoes of recent events:

Je l'aime—cette plaine avec un moulin mort—
Ses champs bien partagés expriment la mesure.
Mais j'entretiens en moi, trop soucieux du sort,
Une étrange blessure.

In spite of the ruined houses, in spite of the mutilated landscape, in spite of death, "life continues." War has inspired numberless poets. Louis Mandin, already known by his *Saisons ferventes*, *Ariel esclave*, has given us *Notre Passion*, a book full of the horrors and suffering of war, expressed in both verse and prose. This poet was a great soldier, but he is not so great an artist. His poetical transposition of facts is not sufficient. His hand shakes with emotion while writing; and though he finds occasional strains of real poetry—

Vents qui soufflez la mort, vents qu'embaumait la rose,
Ah! que vous soulevez en nous de souvenirs!—

his moods remain too often untranslated into artistic form.

Beyond the ordinary production of verse, the above-mentioned books mark an important period of French poetry: our muse has kept her poise and melancholy smile during the five last years. Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Moréas, with their cult of artistic form, their subtle sincerity, are all-pervading influences. Yet in spite of influence, France possesses now a few original poets, to say nothing of those who had already attracted universal attention and are well known in America. *Vers libre* and traditional form have acquired a great pliancy in the hands of real artists, whose offerings are a joy forever to the lovers of poetry.

Jean Catel

MACHINERY IN ART

To the Editor of POETRY: In POETRY No. II, Vol. XVI, a contributor's soliloquies in connection with our Eiffel Tower, his quotation especially from a recently-deceased French writer, reminds me (once more) of some facts too recently overlooked in the world's complete disregard of England's contributions to new perceptions, viz., that Rudyard Kipling (English) was the first to express the beauty of machinery in literature; that Turner (English) was the first to introduce it into art.

Marinettis, Apollinaires, etc., are sequels to these [modest] forerunners.

Muriel Ciolkowska